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FM AMEMBASSY VICTORIA

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INFO AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PDIP, PEPR, PINR, PINT, PINS, MARR, MPOL, SCUL,

SEDU, ECON, EAID, SE

SUBJECT: SEYCHELLES DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS: A FINAL REPORT

REF: 77 VICTORIA 781

SUMMARY: THIS REPORT, ON MY DEPARTURE AFTER OVER TWO YEARS AS CHARGE, IS A SUMMARY OF POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL IDEOLOGICAL AND BILATERAL DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS AND A FORECAST OF POSSIBLE FUTURE TRENDS. THE POLITICAL SCENE HAS REMAINED FLUID AND THE PROSPECTS FOR STABILITY UNCERTAIN. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE ARE
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CLEAR SIGNS THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT F.A. RENE, WHICH SEIZED POWER IN A JUNE, 1977 COUP D'ETAT, IS INCREASING BOTH THE PACE AND SCOPE OF MAJOR REFORMS DESIGNED TO REVAMP SOCIETY AND BRING ABOUT A "MODEL SOCIALIST STATE". THIS HAS RESULTED IN AN EROSION OF SOME PERSONAL FREEDOMS AND IS LIKELY TO LEAD TO INCREASED SOCIAL REGIMENTATION. STILL, U.S. HAS SUCCEEDED IN MAINTAINING A CLOSE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

SUPPORTIVE OF SIGNIFICANT STRATEGIC U.S. INTERESTS IN SEYCHELLES AND THE CENTRAL INDIAN OCEAN REGION. THE SOVIETS HAVE TO DATE BEEN LARGELY UNSUCCESSFUL IN MAKING INROADS IN A COUNTRY TO WHICH, I BELIEVE, THEY ATTACH CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE. TO MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN THIS RELATIONSHIP (WITH A VIEW TOWARD THE PROTECTION OF OUR STRATEGIC INTERESTS), A GREATER USG EFFORT WILL BE REQUIRED OVER THE NEXT CRITICAL 1-2 YEAR PERIOD.

1. RENE AND HIS GOVERNMENT: MODERN SEYCHELLES POLITICAL HISTORY CAN FAIRLY BE SAID TO HAVE BEGUN IN THE MID-1960'S AND THROUGHOUT THAT PERIOD, ONLY TWO FIGURES EMERGED AS FIRST-RANK NATIONAL PERSONALITIES--DEPOSED PRESIDENT J.R. MANCHAM (IN EXILE IN LONDON) AND PRESIDENT F.A. RENE. RENE, FOUNDER AND UNRIVALED LEADER OF THE PRO-INDEPENDENCE AND AVOWEDLY SOCIALIST SEYCHELLES PEOPLE'S UNITED PARTY (SPUP), IS A COMPLEX AND CONSUMMATE POLITICIAN. HE IS PROPELLED TO AN UNUSUAL DEGREE BY A MIXTURE OF IDEALISM AND PRAGMATISM WHICH HAS RESULTED IN A POLITICAL CAREER OF CAREFULLY CONSIDERED ADJUSTMENTS IN TACTICS AND ACTIONS WHEN NECESSARY. (BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH CONTAINED 77 VICTORIA A-07, NOTAL). HE IS AN INTELLIGENT AND INDEFATIGABLE ADMINISTRATOR, AND AS A STAUNCH NATIONALIST, IS INTENSELY PROUD OF SEYCHELLES INDEPENDENCE. RENE ALSO DISPLAYS A SINCERE DESIRE TO RAISE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF SEYCHELLES' POORER ELEMENTS, WHICH IS REFLECTED IN HIS SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLICIES. HIS ULTIMATE OBJECTIVES APPEAR TO BE THE REALIZATION OF HIS CONCEPT OF

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A MODEL SOCIALIST STATE WHICH WOULD INCLUDE THE TRANSFORMATION (IN HIS VIEW) OF THE SEYCHELLOIS INTO A HARD WORKING, "SOCIALLY AWARE" AND "COLLECTIVELY MOTIVATED" GROUP. RENE, UNLIKE MANY OTHER THIRD WORLD SOCIALISTS, CONSIDERS NEW DEPARTURES THOROUGHLY AND MOVES MORE CAUTIOUSLY THAN MOST IN THEIR IMPLEMENTATION. ALTHOUGH THERE IS A STRONG HUMANIST STRAIN IN HIS MAKEUP, HE HAS SHOWN A CAPACITY FOR TOUGH ACTION WHEN HE DEEMS IT NECESSARY. IN HIS FIFTEEN MONTHS IN POWER, PARTIALLY BECAUSE SEYCHELLES IS SO DEPENDENT ON TOURISM, FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE, HE HAS FOCUSED MOST REFORMS IN THE SOCIO-POLITICAL AREA AND HAS LEFT PRE-COUP ECONOMIC STRUCTURES INTACT. THIS CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE AT LEAST OVER THE SHORT TERM. ALTHOUGH HE IS AT PRESENT APPARENTLY UNENCUMBERED BY A SERIOUS CHALLENGER FROM WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY (RENAMED THE SEYCHELLES PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE FRONT-SPPF-IN JUNE, 1978), THIS GRADUAL APPROACH IS NOT FAVORED BY THOSE OF RENE'S MINISTERS MORE INFLUENCED AND PROPELLED THAN HE IS BY SOCIALIST/MARXIST DOCTRINE. RENE'S CABINET IS AN ODD COMPOSITE OF IDEOLOGICALLY DISPARATE PERSONALITIES, MANY OF WHOM ARE INTENSE PERSONAL RIVALS. WHILE THEY DEFY EASY CLASSIFICATION, HIS MINISTERS CAN BE PLACED IN THREE GENERAL CATEGORIES: ON THE FAR LEFT ARE

MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE JACQUES HODOUL AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND ADMINISTRATION JAMES MICHEL, BOTH OF WHOM TAKE A MARXIST VIEW OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. TOWARD THE RIGHT ARE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TOURISM GUY SINON AND MINISTER OF WORKS AND PORT PHILIBERT LOIZEAU, BOTH VETERAN SPUP LEADERS WHO SERVED IN THE PRE-COUP COALITION GOVERNMENT. LOIZEAU, AT LEAST, APPEARS TO HAVE LOST CONSIDERABLE GROUND POLITICALLY OVER THE PAST YEAR, THOUGH BOTH HE AND SINON CONTINUE TO RETAIN A GREATER POPULAR FOLLOWING THAN EITHER HODOUL OR MICHEL. THE RELATIVELY NON-IDEOLOGICAL CENTER IS OCCUPIED BY SOMEWHAT AMBIGUOUS PERSONALITIES (OGILVY BERLOUIS-INTERNAL AFFAIRS; MATTHEW SERVINA-LABOR, HEALTH AND WELFARE; MAXIME FERRARI-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT). THE LATTER TWO ARE INTENSELY AMBITIOUS AND SERVINA, A BLACK, ENJOYS STRONG SUPPORT AMONG

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SEYCHELLOIS YOUTH AND THE COUNTRY'S DARKER-SKINNED POPULATION.

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FOR THE MOMENT, BERLOUIS IS THOUGHT OF AS "RENE'S MAN".
OVER THE YEARS, RENE HAS BEEN ABLE TO EXERCISE CONTROL OVER
HIS COHORTS THROUGH THE FORCE OF HIS OWN PERSONALITY AND
INTELLECT AND BY PLAYING ON THEIR MUTUAL DISTRUST AND RIVALRY.
IN ADDITION, SINCE COMING TO POWER, HE HAS ASSAUGED THEIR
AMBITIONS BY JUDICIOUSLY DELEGATING RESPONSIBILITY. THE
ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO INCORPORATE PROVISIONS FOR ESTABLISH-
MENT OF ONLY ONE PARTY IN THE NEW CONSTITUTION (EXPECTED
TO BE DRAFTED AND APPROVED IN EARLY 1979), COUPLED WITH
INCREASED EMPHASIS ON SPPF ORGANIZATIONS, WILL PROBABLY
PRODUCE A CONDITION OF PARTY GOVERNMENT AFTER THE JUNE,
1979 ELECTIONS. THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE RELATIVE HANDFUL OF
ABLE APOLITICAL CIVIL SERVANTS CAN ACCOMMODATE THEMSELVES
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TO THIS EVOLVING SITUATION WILL BE AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN
THE CONTINUED SMOOTH FUNCTIONING OF GOVERNMENT.

2. PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE STABILITY: FEW COUNTRIES HAVE
EXPERIENCED A MORE TRAUMATIC FIRST TWO YEARS OF NATIONHOOD
THAN SEYCHELLES. A FRAGILE COALITION GOVERNMENT SET UP
UNDER BRITISH URGING AND COMPOSED OF IDEOLOGICALLY AND
PERSONALLY ANTAGONISTIC FIGURES DID NOT SURVIVE ITS FIRST
YEAR IN OFFICE. THE COUP D'ETAT OF JUNE 5, 1977, WHICH DEPOSED
CONSERVATIVE, PRO-WEST PRESIDENT JAMES MANCHAM HAS, HOWEVER,
IF ANYTHING, LED TO AN UNRELIEVED CONDITION OF HEIGHTENED
POLITICAL TENSION, AND THE PAST 14 MONTHS HAVE BEEN REplete
WITH UNENDING SPECULATION OF EXTERNALLY MOUNTED COUNTER-COUP
ATTEMPTS BY MANCHAM SUPPORTERS OR DIVISIONS WITHIN THE RENE
GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD LEAD TO AN INTERNAL UPHEAVAL. STREET
TALK HAS CITED SPECIFIC DATES WHEN A COUNTER-COUP ATTEMPT
WOULD BE MOUNTED, AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS IMPOSED STRICT
SECURITY PRECAUTIONS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS. MOST RECENTLY,
ON APRIL 29, THE GOS CLAIMED TO HAVE FOILED A COUNTER-COUP
PLOT AND ARRESTED AND DETAINED 21 SEYCHELLOIS WHOM IT FELT
WERE ABETTING ALLEGED ATTEMPTS BY THE FORMER REGIME TO
RETURN TO POWER BY FORCE. ARMY AND MILITIA-MANNED ROADBLOCKS
AND "SECURITY ALERTS" HAVE HAD AN UNSETTLING EFFECT ON THE
POPULATION, THOUGH SURPRISINGLY THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE
DISCERNIBLE ADVERSE IMPACT ON TOURISM. ALL 21 DETAINEES HAVE
NOW BEEN RELEASED FROM PRISON, AND SOME 15 OF THESE HAVE
EMIGRATED, MAINLY TO ENGLAND AND AUSTRALIA, WHERE IT IS LIKELY
THEY WILL JOIN THE LARGE AND POLITICALLY ACTIVE SEYCHELLOIS
COMMUNITIES RESIDING IN THOSE TWO COUNTRIES. THE POSSIBILITY
OF AN EXTERNALLY-FINANCED, MERCENARY-LED COUNTER-COUP ATTEMPT
CANNOT BE EXCLUDED, THOUGH THE DANGER FROM THIS QUARTER HAS PROB-
ABLY DECLINED AS THE REGIME BECOMES MORE FIRMLY ENTRENCHED.

ACTIVE PRO-MANCHAM LOCAL OPPOSITION APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN
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THOROUGHLY CHECKED BY RENE'S FIRM ACTION IN PERIOD APRIL-JUNE. NEVERTHELESS, DESPITE HIS ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEADERSHIP SHORTCOMINGS, EX-PRESIDENT MANCHAM HAS MAINTAINED A CONSIDERABLE POPULAR FOLLOWING AND SHOULD HE COMMIT HIMSELF TO A SERIOUS, CONCERTED EFFORT TO STAGE A COMEBACK, ITS CHANCES OF SUCCESS WOULD BE GREATLY ENHANCED. FORTUNATELY FOR THE RENE GOVERNMENT, THIS EFFORT IS PRESENTLY BEING LED BY TWO CORRUPT, LACKLUSTER AND GENERALLY DISCREDITED FORMER MINISTERS (DAVID JOUBERT AND ANDRE UZICE) AND WITHOUT MANCHAM'S COLLABORATION AND CHARISMA, THEIR PROSPECTS ARE DIM. INTERNALLY, RENE APPEARS TO BE IN FULL CONTROL OF HIS GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH SOME OF HIS MORE LEFTIST MINISTERS MAY BECOME IMPATIENT WITH THE PACE TOWARD THE CREATION OF THE "NEW SOCIETY" AND BE TEMPTED TO SEIZE ON AN APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITY TO UNSEAT HIM. TO DO THIS, HOWEVER, THEY WOULD NEED THE SUPPORT--OR AT LEAST THE ACQUIESCENCE--OF THE 200-300 MAN LIBERATION ARMY CREATED BY RENE FROM AMONG HIS STAUNCHEST FOLLOWERS AFTER THE COUP. OUR PRESENT ASSESSMENT IS THAT THE ARMY REMAINS STRONGLY SUPPORTIVE OF RENE. IN ADDITION, OTHER POLITICAL FIGURES IN RENE'S PARTY REALIZE THAT AT PRESENT AND FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE RENE IS THE ONLY POLITICIAN WITH A BROAD POPULAR BASE AND A MEASURE OF ACCEPTABILITY EVEN AMONG PRO-MANCHAM FACTIONS WHO FRANKLY DREAD THE EMERGENCE OF ANY GOS MINISTER. ANY SUCCESSOR REGIME WOULD HAVE TO RULE THROUGH REPRESSION, AND A SITUATION OF CHRONIC POLITICAL INSTABILITY WOULD MOST LIKELY RESULT.

THERE ARE RECURRING REPORTS OF FRICTION BETWEEN THE ARMY AND THE MORE NUMEROUS BUT POORLY ARMED POLICE FORCE OVER PAY AND PRIVILEGES, BUT RENE HAS MOVED TO REDUCE THIS NATURAL RIVALRY. WHILE THE LIBERATION ARMY IS, AT PRESENT, A DISCIPLINED, STABILIZING FACTOR ON THE POLITICAL SCENE, ITS WILLINGNESS TO REMAIN IN THE BARRACKS AND NOT SEEK A GREATER ROLE OR VOICE FOR ITSELF IN GOVERNMENT IS AN UNKNOWN BUT CRITICAL FACTOR FOR THE FUTURE. SINCE THE COUP, TIGHT PERSONAL SECURITY HAS SURROUNDED RENE, WHO HAS OFTEN EX-
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PRESSED FEAR OF ASSASSINATION.

3. DOMESTIC POLICIES AND PERFORMANCE: IN THE EIGHT MONTHS SINCE REFTEL REVIEW OF POLICIES AND PROGRAMS UNDERTAKEN BY THE RENE GOVERNMENT, THE PACE OF REFORMS HAS BEEN STEPPED UP

AND THEIR SCOPE HAS BEEN BROADENED. THIS IS BELIEVED TO BE
THE RESULT BOTH OF A DESIRE BY RENE TO IMPLEMENT THOSE
CHANGES FOR WHICH THE COUP WAS CARRIED OUT AND AN UNCERTAIN

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BUT PROBABLY SIGNIFICANT DEGREE OF PRESSURE ON RENE BY HIS
MINISTERS FOR MORE RAPID MOVES TOWARD ESTABLISHMENT OF A
SOCIALIST STATE. INTER ALIA, GOS HAS (A) COMPLETED
NATIONALIZATION OF BUS TRANSPORT; (B) ACCELERATED LOW-COST
HOUSING SCHEME; (C) INTRODUCED EDUCATIONAL MEASURES DESIGNED
TO PROVIDE EIGHT YEARS OF UNIFORM QUALITY, FREE SCHOOLING;
(D) ANNOUNCED ABOLITION OF PRIVATE MEDICAL PRACTICE
SCHEDULED TO TAKE EFFECT IN JANUARY, 1979; (E) AMALGAMATED
SEYCHELLES' SEVENTEEN INDEPENDENT TRADE UNIONS INTO A
NATIONAL FEDERATION AND (F) INITIATED STUDY TO NATIONALIZE
(WITH UNCERTAIN COMPENSATION) LAND HOLDINGS PRESENTLY HELD
"FOR SPECULATIVE PURPOSES". IN ADDITION, PRESIDENT RENE, IN
MAJOR POLICY SPEECH DELIVERED ON FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF COUP
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D'ETAT, SET FORTH GOS POLICY OF RESTRICTING HOME OWNERSHIP TO ONE DWELLING. WHILE THESE MEASURES HAVE MET WITH GENERAL APPROVAL FROM PREVIOUSLY DISADVANTAGED MASSES (WITH WHOM RENE HAS NEVER BEEN MORE POPULAR), FORMERLY PRIVILEGED, ARTICULATE MERCANTILE AND LAND-OWNING CLASSES HAVE BEEN BITTERLY DISAPPOINTED. A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER HAVE VOTED WITH THEIR FEET AND HAVE EITHER EMIGRATED OR ARE MAKING PLANS TO DO SO IN NEAR FUTURE. BUS CORPORATION, WHICH WAS TO HAVE PROVIDED INEXPENSIVE, RELIABLE TRANSPORTATION ON PREVIOUSLY UNSERVICED ROUTES, HAS BEEN SHARPLY CRITICIZED FOR SLOPPY MANAGEMENT. THE UNEXPLAINED LONG DELAY IN THE ARRIVAL OF A MODERN BUS FLEET PURCHASED FROM INDIA HAS REDUCED SERVICE, AND THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT DRIVERS (MANY OF WHOM WERE FORMER BUS OWNERS) HAVE DELIBERATELY SABOTAGED EXISTING VEHICLES. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE RELIABLE REPORTS THAT FORMER BUS CORPORATION MANAGERS ENGAGED IN WIDESPREAD CORRUPT ACTIVITIES, CONTRIBUTING TO A FIRST YEAR LOSS OF NEARLY ONE MILLION DOLLARS. RENE HAS DISMISSED NEARLY ENTIRE TOP ECHELON AND HAS EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT BETTER SERVICES WILL

BE PROVIDED IN NEAR FUTURE AND THAT CORPORATION WILL SHOW A PROFIT NEXT YEAR. IN HEALTH FIELD, REPORTEDLY ALL PHYSICIANS IN PRIVATE PRACTICE HAVE TURNED DOWN OFFERS OF GOVERNMENT JOBS AND WILL DEPART SEYCHELLES, LEAVING GOS, WHICH AT ONE TIME COULD BOAST OF PROVIDING AMONG BEST MEDICAL CARE IN DEVELOPING WORLD, WITH POTENTIALLY SERIOUS PROBLEM OVER THE SHORT TERM. FINALLY, TEACHERS HAVE BEEN ANGERED BY LATE JULY LETTER FROM MINISTER HODOUL STATING THAT FUTURE PROMOTIONS WILL BE BASED "ON POLITICAL AWARENESS" AND LOYALTY TO THE GOVERNMENT. (HODOUL WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN SEVERELY CRITICIZED BY RENE FOR THIS ACTION AT RECENT CABINET MEETING.) DESPITE THESE SHORTCOMINGS, GOS MEASURES HAVE BEEN GREETED WITH GENERAL APPROVAL FROM MASSES FOR WHOM PROMISES

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OF EQUAL TREATMENT AND OPPORTUNITY, A GOVERNMENT-SUBSIDIZED HOUSE AND FULL EMPLOYMENT "AS DIGNIFIED WORKERS" HAVE CONSIDERABLE ALLURE. THEY ARE PROBABLY NOT YET CONSCIOUS OF THE EXTENT OF DISCIPLINE RENE INTENDS TO IMPOSE ON THEIR FORMER FREE-WHEELING, OFTEN SLOTHFUL LIFE STYLE.

4. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND FOREIGN ASSISTANCE: AS FORECAST IN REFTEL, POST-COUP GOVERNMENT HAS ADOPTED A MORE TRULY NON-ALIGNED POSTURE IN WORLD AFFAIRS AND HAS TAKEN ESPECIALLY "PROGRESSIVE" POSITIONS WITH RESPECT TO VIRTUALLY ALL AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS (INCLUDING POLISARIO) AND THE DEMILI-

TARIZATION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN. ON THE LATTER ISSUE, GOS (LARGELY AT INSTIGATION OF HODOUL) HOSTED REGIONAL DEMILITARIZATION CONFERENCE OF "PROGRESSIVE PARTIES AND FORCES" IN APRIL. ALTHOUGH FIGURATIVELY AND LITERALLY RENE ATTEMPTED TO DISTANCE HIMSELF FROM CONFERENCE (HE WAS VISITING PRC AT TIME), POLITICAL RESOLUTIONS WERE ADOPTED (VICTORIA 391) WHICH WERE WEIGHTED AGAINST FRENCH AND U.S. INTERESTS IN THIS AREA. RENE HAS ALSO SHOWN A DISQUIETING RECEPTIVITY TO OVERTURES FOR ASSISTANCE FROM RADICAL REGIMES SUCH AS LIBYA AND NORTH KOREA (BOTH OF WHICH HE VISITED THIS YEAR), HAS ESTABLISHED NON-RESIDENT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH CUBA AND AGREED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT IN SEYCHELLES OF A LIBYAN EMBASSY (VICTORIA 545). (AT PRESENT, SEYCHELLES, LARGELY AS REFLECTION OF ITS STRATEGIC LOCATION, MAY BE ONLY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD WHERE FIVE PERMANENT MEMBERS OF UNSC AND NO OTHERS ARE REPRESENTED LOCALLY.) REGIONALLY, SEYCHELLES HAS ATTEMPTED WITH NOTABLE SUCCESS TO IMPROVE ITS RELATIONS WITH KENYA AND MAURITIUS WHICH WERE STRAINED FOLLOWING COUP D'ETAT AND CONTINUES TO LOOK TO TANZANIA AS THE SINGLE AFRICAN STATE MOST IN CONCERT WITH WHAT GOS HOPES TO ATTAIN. (EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED RELIABLE REPORT THAT NUMBER OF TANZANIAN MILITARY ADVISORS TRAINING "LIBERATION ARMY" HAS RECENTLY BEEN INCREASED BY TEN TO TOTAL OF 25.) WHILE PRC HAS AGREED TO FINANCE CONSTRUCTION OF A MAJOR SECONDARY SCHOOL (VICTORIA 331), FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE, MOST DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IS CONFIDENTIAL

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EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO BE PROVIDED BY WESTERN DONORS. UK, FORMER METROPOLITAN POWER, HAS AN ONGOING AID PACKAGE OF APPROXIMATELY DOLS 11 MILLION PER YEAR (60 MILLION SINCE 1970) AND FRANCE, WHOSE INTERESTS ARE PRIMARILY STRATEGIC AND CULTURAL, WILL FURNISH ABOUT DOLS 16 MILLION OVER NEXT THREE YEARS. BELGIUM, FRG, CANADA, AUSTRALIA, EEC AND UN AGENCIES ALSO HAVE OR ARE MOUNTING SIGNIFICANT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. (U.S. ASSISTANCE AT PRESENT IS LIMITED TO MODEST 13-YEAR-OLD PL 480 TITLE II PROGRAM AND SMALL SELF-

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HELP EFFORT). SEYCHELLES PRESENT DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN AID
AND NATURE OF PRINCIPAL DONOR STATES, COMBINED WITH NEED
POLICIES WILL NOT VEER TOO FAR FROM PRESENT MIDDLE COURSE,
WHICH COMBINES ACCEPTABLE LEFTIST RHETORIC WITH GENERALLY
PRAGMATIC, OFTEN MODERATE DECISION MAKING/POLICY IMPLEMENTATION.

5. SOVIET OBJECTIVES AND FRUSTRATIONS: IN MY VIEW, SEYCHELLES
POTENTIALLY IS A VERY VALUABLE STRATEGIC PRIZE FOR THE SOVIET
UNION, AND THE EMERGENCE OF A PRO-SOVIET GOVERNMENT IN
SEYCHELLES WOULD CONSTITUTE A MAJOR VICTORY FOR MOSCOW. THIS
ISLAND NATION, WHOSE SEA AREA COVERS NEARLY A HALF MILLION
SQUARE MILES, ABOUNDS IN EXCELLENT DEEP WATER ANCHORAGES,
MANY OF WHICH ARE CLOSE TO ISLANDS WHERE
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EXTENSIVE SHORE FACILITIES (NOT UNLIKE DIEGO GARCIA) COULD
BE CONSTRUCTED. ALREADY IN PLACE ON THE PRINCIPAL ISLAND OF
MAHE IS AN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT WITH A 9,000 FOOT RUNWAY
AND AMPLE POL STORAGE. SEYCHELLES AIRPORT IS NEARLY EQUI-
DISTANT BETWEEN DIEGO GARCIA AND THE EAST AFRICAN COAST, IS
THE ONLY CONCRETE AIRSTRIP FOR NEARLY 1,000 MILES IN ANY
DIRECTION ANYKIS IDEALLY SITUATED TO SERVE AS A REFUELING STOP
ON BOTH NORTH-SOUTH AND EAST-WEST INDIAN OCEAN AXES. BEYOND
THE CONSIDERABLE DIRECT ADVANTAGES WHICH WOULD ACCRUE TO THE
SOVIETS IF A PLIABLE REGIME WERE SOMEHOW TO BE INSTALLED, THE
PREDICTABLE CONSEQUENT ABROGATION OF EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS WITH
WESTERN STATES WOULD FURNISH THEM WITH A DOUBLE TRIUMPH SINCE THE
REMOVAL OF THE USAF SATELLITE TRACKING STATION (AN IMPORTANT

COMPONENT IN THE DOD SATELLITE NETWORK) AND THE CLOSURE OF SEYCHELLES FACILITIES TO USN AND OTHER WESTERN WARSHIPS AND MILITARY AIRCRAFT COULD QUICKLY FOLLOW. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT JUST SUCH AN ATTRACTIVE SCENARIO HAS MOTIVATED A SEEMINGLY DISPROPORTINATE COMMITMENT OF SOVIET DIPLOMATIC RESOURCES TO SEYCHELLES. IN THE 15 MONTHS SINCE A RESIDENT SOVIET EMBASSY WAS ESTABLISHED IN SEYCHELLES (THE SOVIET CHARGE ARRIVED SIX DAYS BEFORE COUP D'ETAT), PRESIDENT RENE, WHO PRIVATELY HAS OFTEN EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT SOVIET INTENTIONS IN SEYCHELLES AND INDIAN OCEAN REGION, HAS CONSISTENTLY TURNED ASIDE ALL OFFERS OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. ACCORDINGLY, THE EFFORTS OF AMBASSADOR STARTSEV, A HIGH-RANKING MFA OFFICIAL (HE SERVED AS SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO GUINEA 1968-1970), AND HIS YOUNG, BRIGHT AND COSMOPOLITAN STAFF TO MAKE DISCERNIBLE INROADS HAVE MET WITH APPARENT FRUSTRATION AND DISAPPOINTMENT. A GENERAL COOPERATION AGREEMENT SIGNED LATE LAST YEAR HAS NOT YET RESULTED IN ANY TANGIBLE GAIN FOR THE SOVIETS, AND THE VISIT OF A SOVIET FISHERIES DELEGATION (VICTORIA 587) WAS A DISMAL FAILURE. AT AN AUG 7 PRESS CONFERENCE, RENE SCOTCHED OVERSEAS PRESS REPORTS THAT THE SOVIETS HAD BEEN SEEKING NAVAL FACILI-
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TIES AND ADDED GOS POLICY AGAINST FOREIGN BASES WAS CLEAR. ON THE OTHER HAND, TWO POLITICALLY SIGNIFICANT MEMBERS OF THE SPPF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (ESME JUMEAU AND SYLVETTE FRICHOT) AND THE HEAD OF THE NATIONAL TRADE UNION (OLIVIER CHARLES) HAVE VISITED THE SOVIET UNION, ALONG WITH EIGHT SEYCHELLOIS EN ROUTE TO THE HAVANA YOUTH FESTIVAL. SOVIET WARSHIPS HAVE CALLED FOUR TIMES OVER THE PAST YEAR AS COMPARED WITH TEN USN SHIP VISITS, ABOUT FIFTEEN FRENCH VISITS AND PORT CALLS BY ABOUT EIGHT WARSHIPS FROM LITTORAL STATES. U.S. AND AUSTRALIAN P-3 MARITIME PATROL PLANES AND FRENCH C-130 HERCULES ARE ONLY MILITARY AIRCRAFT PRESENTLY UTILIZING SEYCHELLES AIRPORT FOR REFUELING AND CREW REST. RENE'S PRODUCTIVE VISIT TO PRC, WHOSE MAIN CURRENT INTEREST IN SEYCHELLES IS PROBABLY TO KEEP SOVIETS AT BAY, REPRESENTED A NOTABLE SETBACK FOR THE SOVIETS. IN THE FUTURE, HOWEVER, IT CAN BE ANTICIPATED THAT RENE, IN HIS OWN PERCEIVED INTEREST, WILL ATTEMPT TO BE SOMEWHAT MORE ACCOMMODATING TO SOVIET OVERTURES. I BELIEVE HIS REASONING ON THIS SCORE IS THAT IF AND WHEN THE SOVIETS BECOME CONVINCED THAT RENE WILL NOT BE SUPPORTIVE OF THEIR OBJECTIVES, THEY MAY ATTEMPT TO DESTABILIZE THE GOVERNMENT. ALREADY THERE ARE SIGNS THAT SOVIET EMBOFFS ARE ACTIVELY COURTING RENE'S MORE LEFT-LEANING MINISTERS. THEY MAY ALSO TRY TO GAIN (OR BUY) SUPPORT IN THE SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT. AN INTERNAL POWER PLAY OR AN ATTEMPTED MERCENARY-LED, COUNTER-COUP ATTEMPT WOULD FURNISH THE SOVIET UNION WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE MATERIAL BACKING FOR A SYMPATHETIC FACTION.

6. ECONOMIC SCENE: THROUGHOUT THE 1970'S, (SINCE THE

CONSTRUCTION OF AN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT PERMITTED EXPLOI-
TATION OF SEYCHELLES' VAST TOURISM POTENTIAL), REAL ECONOMIC
GROWTH HAS AVERAGED 6-8 PERCENT PER YEAR, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT
DOUBLE-DIGIT INFLATION. IN 1977, DESPITE THE UNSETTLED
ATMOSPHERE FOLLOWING THE MID-YEAR COUP D'ETAT, SEYCHELLES
REGISTERED A GROWTH RATE ESTIMATED AT 7 PERCENT AND GOS
CLAIMS TO HAVE TRIMMED INFLATION TO 3 PERCENT APPEAR TO BE
ACCURATE. OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS AT LEAST, DESPITE GOS
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EFFORTS TO DIVERSIFY THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC BASE, TOURISM
WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE PRINCIPAL FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNER AND
WILL SOON SURPASS GOVERNMENT AS THE LARGEST EMPLOYER.

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

ICA-11 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05 HA-05

ACDA-12 IO-13 OES-09 NASA-01 /130 W

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FM AMEMBASSY VICTORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1101

INFO AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

CINCPAC

COMIDEASTFOR

AFSCF SUNNYVALE CA

DET 4 AFSCF MAHE ISLAND SEYCHELLES

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IN 1977, SPENDING BY SOME 60,000 TOURISTS EARNED NEARLY

DOLS 24 MILLION, HELPING TO OFFSET SEYCHELLES' CHRONIC TRADE IMBALANCE (DOLS 38 MILLION IN 1977). TOURIST ARRIVALS THUS FAR IN 1978 HAVE INCREASED 11 PERCENT OVER 1977, THOUGH A SMALL DECLINE IN AVERAGE BED NIGHTS HAS LIMITED REAL GROWTH TO 4-5 PERCENT. A NEW LUXURY CLASS HOTEL WAS OPENED IN MAY, AND CONSTRUCTION OF A 350-BED "SHOWCASE" SHERATON IS EXPECTED TO COMMENCE THIS YEAR. HOWEVER, A DOLS 10 MILLION HYATT-MANAGED HOTEL PROJECT OWNED BY ACTOR PETER SELLARS AND EX-BEATLE GEORGE HARRISON WAS RECENTLY SCRAPPED WITH A LOSS OF DOLS 3 MILLION FOR THE INVESTORS APPARENTLY BECAUSE OF FEARS OF POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY. TO COMPLEMENT TOURISM, GOS (THROUGH ANGLO-FRENCH AID) WILL ESTABLISH A COMMERCIAL FISHING INDUSTRY

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BY 1980 WHICH ANNUALLY COULD EARN AS MUCH AS 20 MILLION DOLLARS. LICENSE FEES FROM VESSELS CURRENTLY "POACHING" IN SEYCHELLES' WATERS SHOULD BE ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNER. DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON LARGER OUTLYING ISLANDS, IS ANOTHER HIGH PRIORITY GOS OBJECTIVE. FINALLY, SEISMIC TESTING FOR POSSIBLE OFF-SHORE OIL BY AN INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM LED BY BURMAH OIL IS BEING CARRIED OUT SOME 80 MILES FROM MAHE. AT PRESENT, HOWEVER, THE EMERGENCE OF A SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT HAS DETERRED FOREIGN INVESTORS DESPITE GOS ASSURANCES THAT IT WILL NOT (A) IMPOSE EXCHANGE CONTROLS; (B) INHIBIT REPATRIATION OF PROFITS OR (C) NATIONALIZE BUSINESSES. BANKS ARE ALSO REPORTEDLY PRESENTLY EXPERIENCING A LIQUIDITY PROBLEM AS LOCAL MERCHANTS AND OTHERS SEND THEIR MONEY ABROAD RATHER THAN REINVEST BEYOND THEIR IMMEDIATE REQUIREMENTS. THERE ARE ALSO REPORTS THAT GOVERNMENT IS BORROWING HEAVILY FROM LOCAL BANKS, LARGELY TO FINANCE PURCHASE OF FLEET OF BUSES AND DEFRAY INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS OF EEC-FUNDED LOW-COST HOUSING SCHEME. RENE CONTINUES TO BE PERSONALLY AVAILABLE AND RECEPTIVE TO "SERIOUS, NON-SPECULATIVE" INVESTORS AND IS BELIEVED TO BE ESPECIALLY ENCOURAGING ARAB INVESTMENT. SEYCHELLES HAS A HIGH FERTILITY RATE (1977 CENSUS SHOWED THAT 42 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION IS UNDER 15 YEARS OF AGE) AND WITH ITS PRESENT FRAGILE ECONOMIC BASE, STEADILY INCREASING INFLOWS OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT WILL BE NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN ACCEPTABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROVIDE FUTURE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

7. U.S. INTERESTS: WHILE IMPORTANT U.S. POLITICAL-MILITARY INTERESTS IN SEYCHELLES HAVE BEEN UNAFFECTED AS A RESULT OF THE 1977 COUP D'ETAT, THEY ARE DEPENDENT ON UNCERTAIN FUTURE STABILITY AND POLITICAL DIRECTION AND ARE, THEREFORE, BY NO MEANS SECURE. PRESIDENT RENE ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS HAS GIVEN UNEQUIVOCAL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ASSURANCES THAT GOS WILL

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HONOR 10-YEAR BILATERAL AGREEMENT GOVERNING PRESENCE AND OPERATION OF USAF SATELLITE TRACKING STATION (SIGNED 1976) AND HAS BEEN UNIFORMLY RECEPTIVE TO VISIT REQUESTS BY USN SHIPS AND AIRCRAFT. AT SAME TIME, AS NOTED ABOVE, RENE HOLDS STRONG VIEWS SUPPORTING GOAL OF AN INDIAN OCEAN ULTIMATELY FREE OF BIG POWER MILITARY/NAVAL FORCES AND HIS MORE DOCTRINE MINISTERS WOULD BE PLEASED TO SEE THE REMOVAL OF THE TRACKING STATION AND A REDUCTION (OR ELIMINATION) OF VISITS BY WESTERN NAVAL VESSELS AND AIRCRAFT. WE BELIEVE RENE WILL CAREFULLY WEIGH ALL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS BETWEEN NOW AND 1981, WHEN, ACCORDING TO TERMS IN AGREEMENT, EITHER PARTY CAN TERMINATE WITH ONE-YEAR NOTICE. THE TRACKING STATION IS AN IMPORTANT ECONOMIC ASSET AND LOCAL SALARIES FOR SEYCHELLOIS WORK FORCE, CONTRACTS AND SPENDING BY THE 130 ASSIGNED AMERICANS TOTAL WELL OVER ONE MILLION DOLLARS ACCORDING TO 1976 USAF ESTIMATES. STATION RELATIONS WITH GOS AND LOCAL COMMUNITY HAVE BEEN AND CONTINUE TO BE EXCELLENT. USG PERFORMANCE OVER NEXT 2-3 YEARS IN SUPPORTING SEYCHELLES' DEVELOPMENT IN A MEANINGFUL WAY THROUGH A MODEST BUT SYSTEMATIC ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WILL BE AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IN PURSUADING GOS THAT CONTINUED STATION PRESENCE IS IN ITS OVERALL INTEREST AND MAY BE THE CRITICAL FACTOR IN RETAINING OUR MILITARY PRESENCE AND CURRENT ACCESS TO IMPORTANT FACILITIES. IF GOS DECIDES TO RENEGOTIATE LEASE, IT CAN REASONABLY BE ANTICIPATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT, ACTING FROM A PERCEIVED POSITION OF STRENGTH, WILL ENGAGE IN HARD BARGAINING AND THAT A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN RENT WILL BE SOUGHT. U.S.-SEYCHELLOIS BILATERAL RELATIONS HAVE BEEN VERY GOOD THROUGHOUT PERIOD SINCE INDEPENDENCE. PRESIDENT RENE IS ACCESSIBLE AND HAS BEEN UNIFORMLY RESPONSIVE TO OUR REQUESTS FOR SHIP/AIRCRAFT VISITS. HE AND OTHER MEMBERS OF GOS, WHILE NOT ALWAYS SUPPORTIVE OF USG FOREIGN POLICY POSITIONS, ARE RECEPTIVE TO EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVES. HOWEVER, IN MY OPINION, THE TIME IS LONG OVERDUE FOR THE USG TO GIVE TANGIBLE EVIDENCE OF OUR SUPPORT FOR SEYCHELLES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OR RISK THE REPERCUSSIONS OF UNFULFILLED RISING EXPECTATIONS. IN RELATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

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FEW AFRICAN COUNTRIES CAN SUCH IMPORTANT U.S. SECURITY INTERESTS BE SO CLEARLY DEFINED. THE COMMITMENT OF VERY MODEST DEVELOPMENTAL FUNDS WILL BE A SURE SIGN OF THE VALUE WE PLACE ON OUR RELATIONSHIP AND PROVIDE THE BEST AVAILABLE GUARANTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF OUR INTERESTS IN THIS STRATEGICALLY LOCATED COUNTRY. THE GEO-POLITICAL STAKES ARE HIGH, AND IT IS TIME FOR USG TO ACT TO MAINTAIN AND, IF POSSIBLE, STRENGTHEN OUR POSITION IN SEYCHELLES.

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